

TYCO 17674 (AT 20958-2034)
PATENT**Remarks**

This communication responds to the Office Action dated April 26, 2004, wherein all of applicants' claims were rejected as either anticipated by, or unpatentable over, prior art. The claims have been amended to better define the subject matter which applicants regard as the invention, and to patentably distinguish over the cited prior art. Reconsideration of the rejections is respectfully requested in view of the amendments to the claims and the following discussion.

Claims 15-18, 23-26, and 30-42 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Eigenbrode et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,252,397), and claims 19-22 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Eigenbrode et al.

Applicants' invention relates to a plurality of electrical connectors which are joined together in a side-by-side array to form a stick of electrical connectors. Each of the connectors includes a conductive connecting device mounted in a non-conductive housing. The connectors are individually separable from the stick to form individual, discrete connector units. Thus, a plurality of electrical connectors can be easily manipulated and handled collectively during a period of time when they are joined in stick form, and yet individual connectors can be separated from the stick to be used independently as desired. Each of the individual connectors is a complete functional unit that includes a conductive connecting device mounted in a housing.

Independent claims 15, 26, 34, 39, 41 and 42 have been amended to recite that each of the electrical connectors includes a conductive connecting (or crimping) device mounted in a housing, and to clarify that each of the electrical connectors forms an individual connector unit after it is separated from other electrical connectors to which it is joined.

Eigenbrode et al. discloses an electrical connector comprising a two-part housing including a base (13) and a cover (20). A plurality of conductive connecting elements (5) are mounted in the base and are locked in place by tabs (23) which engage against a wall of the base (column 5, lines 45-49). The connecting elements (5) are disposed such that tips (9 and 10) of the connecting elements extend above the upper surface of the base (column 5, lines 51-53). Prior to installation of the cover (20) on the base, a plurality of wire conductors (3) are terminated to the connecting elements (5) and bonded thereto such as by ultrasonic welding (column 5, lines 3-12). Afterward, the cover (20) is installed over the connecting elements (5)

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which enter holes in the cover in an interference fit for permanent attachment (column 9, lines 54-61), and the cover is attached to the base such as by ultrasonic bonding.

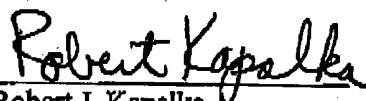
Thus, Eigenbrode et al. expressly teaches a two-part connector housing including a cover and a base that are not separable after they are joined together. The connector includes connecting elements (5) that have locking tabs (23) for permanently gripping the base, and the connecting elements are interference fitted in holes in the cover for permanently gripping the cover. At this point, removing the cover from the base would cause the connecting elements to rip out portions of the plastic housing and thus result in extensive damage to the connector. Even so, Eigenbrode et al. teaches that the cover can be ultrasonically bonded to the base. Clearly, Eigenbrode et al. does not want the cover to be removed from the base, so there is no basis for the Examiner's assertion that the cover (20) is separable from the base (13).

Further, even assuming that Eigenbrode et al. suggests that the cover is separable from the base, doing so would only result in a separate cover and a separate base along with a plurality of connecting elements at undefined locations. The cover and the base are not individual connector units each having a conductive connecting element, as defined in applicants' claims. Eigenbrode et al. does not disclose or suggest applicants' invention as defined in the claims.

For these reasons, applicants believe that independent claims 15, 26, 34, 39, 41 and 42 are patentable over Eigenbrode et al., and that the dependent claims in the application should be allowable as depending from allowable base claims.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections, and allowance of all the claims, are respectfully solicited.

Respectfully Submitted,


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